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## Dissent in China

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**An Intelligence Assessment**

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September 1981

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# Dissent in China

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## **An Intelligence Assessment**

*Information available as of 1 September 1981  
has been used in the preparation of this report.*

This assessment was prepared by [redacted]  
the Office of Political Analysis. Comments and  
queries are welcome and may be directed to the  
Chief, China Internal Division of the new Office of  
East Asian Analysis [redacted]

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This report was coordinated with the National  
Intelligence Officer for East Asia [redacted]

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**Dissent in China**

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**Key Judgments**

The Chinese Communist Party has again cracked down on dissent by rounding up prominent dissidents, suppressing underground journals, and placing restrictions on free expression in party and nonparty forums. Senior Chinese leaders like Vice Chairman Deng Xiaoping and newly appointed Chairman Hu Yaobang view dissent as a potentially serious threat to internal stability. They are preoccupied with China's complex economic difficulties and fear that dissidents will be able to capitalize on popular discontent with the party's new economic strategy, especially unemployment, inflation, and the economic program's effect on vested interests.

In drawing the line on dissent, Deng has responded to the interests of party conservatives in order to gain their backing for his political succession plans. Deng, however, has tried to avoid alienating party liberals and intellectuals—who make up one of his key constituencies—in the process of defining stricter limits on the dissidents. The party's crackdown will not lay the issue of dissent to rest. Rather, it is likely to:

- Further strain relations between the party and the Army, and between leftists and liberals in the party and the bureaucracy. It may embolden leftists to make use of cultural issues to attack reform policies.
- Cause the party to place greater restrictions on a variety of cultural and personal contacts with the West.
- Lessen the enthusiasm of intellectuals for the party's modernization program and reduce the likelihood that the party will overcome the "crisis of confidence" in its mission and objectives.
- Lead to additional controversy, particularly within the Ministry of Culture and intellectual circles, over the limits the party has placed on freedom of expression.

Despite the party's concern, the level of dissent today is relatively low and primarily nonviolent. Moreover, party leaders do not precisely define dissidence. From their perspective, dissidents include not only outspoken advocates of the "democratic movement" who have organized networks across China and who generally work from outside the system to seek change within it, but militant workers, university activists, and artists, writers, and filmmakers who ask fundamental questions about the regime's right to rule and the efficacy of the socialist system. Indeed, dissidents themselves do not present a single, coherent program of opposition to the party, but articulate the dissatisfaction, frustrations, and grievances of the populace with the regime.

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The current restrictions on dissent are unlikely to loosen dramatically in the near future. "The Resolution on Certain Historical Questions" passed by the Sixth Plenum of the party Central Committee in June clearly stated the party's determination to prevent another blossoming of dissident activity. Even if the party can maintain such control, dissidence—which the party cannot extinguish completely without undermining the modernization program—will remain a low-level irritant for the regime.

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**Introduction**

The Chinese leadership is again cracking down on internal dissent following the spread of strikes, demonstrations, and sporadic acts of violence late last year. Senior party leaders, including Deng Xiaoping, view dissent as both dangerous and a long-term threat to stability. The arrests of prominent dissidents, the suppression of underground journals, and the renewed restrictions on the arts all reflect the fear that dissident organizations unchecked will bring a growing and more radical criticism of the regime.

The tighter control over dissent comes at a time when China's leaders are deeply concerned with maintaining social order as they implement a new economic strategy that may increase unemployment and threaten vested interests. Deng, who initially encouraged and manipulated dissent to serve his own political goals, now seeks to draw the line on unacceptable political behavior. Deng has been under pressure from opponents and some members of his own camp to deal harshly with dissent outside the party, and he is clearly willing to toughen his approach at the expense of more liberal elements in his own reformist constituency to prevent hardliners from upsetting his political succession plans.

The suppression of dissent has already widened the gap between reformers and leftists in the party. It has stirred up divisions over policy toward culture and intellectuals in the party's senior ranks and has enabled leftists to make use of cultural issues to attack Deng's reform policy. Paradoxically, it has also strengthened the resolve of liberal academics and of dissidents to air their grievances.

Dissidents have stirred official fears that Western "bourgeois" ideas will erode popular support for Marxism-Leninism by praising aspects of Western democracy, economics, and culture. They articulate widely held grievances and will continue to irritate the regime with their critiques in the future. In the long run, dissidents have the potential to galvanize popular

discontent against the regime in the event of a crisis. More immediately, however, they point to the party's inability to build support for its mission and ideology among the young and the intellectuals.

**Who Dissents and Why**

Chinese leaders regard dissent as any activity that opposes the policies of the Central Committee. In this context, dissent encompasses activities that range from the expression of political opinions at odds with current policy to overtly criminal behavior. As such, any definition of dissent must be somewhat arbitrary. In his speech to the party work conference last December, for example, Deng Xiaoping excoriated all those whose actions threatened "the stability and unity of the political situation"—lumping together political radicals, rioting "down-to-the-countryside" settlers, and rapists, prostitutes, arsonists, and smugglers.

Dissidents have been a persistent irritant to the regime since the Third Plenum of the 11th Central Committee in 1978, when the party endorsed the slogan "emancipate the mind" and in effect broke the Maoist ideological mold. Dissidence reached its height in the "Beijing spring" of 1979 when young "democrats" used wall posters to air their views on the "democracy walls" of Beijing and other cities, and published dissenting essays, poetry, fiction, literary criticism, and woodcuts in spontaneous journals. An outbreak of public disorder that spring forced Deng and party reformers to accede to pressure from both conservatives and leftists and to crack down on assaults on the party's legitimacy. More than 40 dissidents were arrested in Beijing; Wei Jingsheng, Fu Yuehua, and other prominent "democratic figures" were tried and imprisoned later in the year. As a consequence, the level of dissidence dropped sharply and many activists went underground.

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*Dissidents were arrested at Democracy Wall in Beijing when they attempted to distribute the transcript of Wei Jingsheng's trial.*



*Wall poster protesting harsh treatment accorded petitioners from the countryside. Dissidents like Fu Yuehua, arrested in 1979, were accused of organizing these victims of the Cultural Revolution who flocked to Beijing to seek redress of their grievances.*

Although dissent currently remains at a relatively low level, it embraces a broader spectrum of activity than in 1979, ranging from localized flurries of wall poster writing to small-scale, violent demonstrations and underground networks. Dissidents today include both the outspoken advocates of the original "democratic" or "human rights" movement of 1979 and militant workers and university activists. Allied with them across the nation are writers, artists, and filmmakers who, like many party cadres, ask fundamental questions about the system.

Dissidents do not present a single, coherent program of opposition to the party but rather express a variety of views that articulate the dissatisfaction, frustrations, and grievances of the populace with the regime. Most dissidents support socialism, at least in the abstract, and primarily urge the reform of the party and society. Overall, they appear to back Deng Xiaoping, but believe that there must be steady pressure from the outside to prevent Deng and the reform program from succumbing to Maoist counter-currents and bureaucratic inertia.

A minority of dissidents loudly rejects socialism and argues for a variety of systems, including capitalism. Other dissidents, particularly in academic circles, criticize the current regime from the viewpoint of classical Marxism. Such critics challenge the ideological soundness of concepts fundamental to the legitimacy of the regime.

Some general themes are common to most dissidents:

- Bureaucratic abuses and special privileges for officials. The dissidents accuse the party of forming a new class and argue that socialism engenders bureaucratic abuses that separate the people from the government.
- Party domination of intellectual life and violation of constitutional guarantees. Dissidents advocate expanded intellectual freedom, including the freedom to publish opinions at variance with orthodox party views, and an end to party interference in the arts and sciences. Dissidents also attempt to hold the party to the constitutional guarantees of freedom of speech and assembly, and of rule by law.

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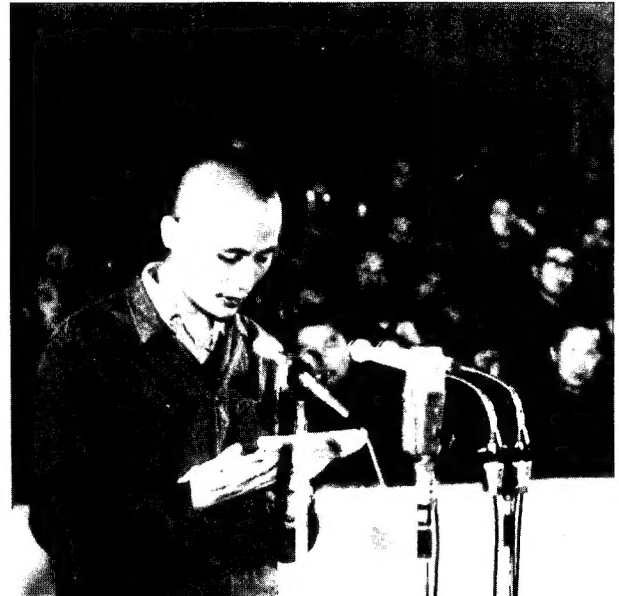
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*Mass demonstrations in Beijing and other major Chinese cities on 5 April 1976 helped to undermine the regime of Jiang Qing and paved the way to Deng Xiaoping's ascent to power.*



*Wei Jingsheng, at his trial in the fall of 1979, argued that without democracy, the "fifth modernization," China would not be able to modernize.*

- Subordination of democracy to the requirements of modernization. Dissidents assert that democracy, the "fifth modernization," should be a national goal. Deng and other senior leaders argue, in contrast, that the selective use of democracy is simply a means to stimulate enthusiasm for the regime's programs. Their final goal is a powerful socialist state akin to the more traditional aim of "wealth and power."

#### Focal Points of Dissent

The "**democratic movement**," which probably numbers several thousand activists across China, is the most intractable and troublesome dissident element and, as such, is the primary target of periodic crackdowns. The party, mindful of its own origins, is wary of challenges from small, organized groups, as well as apprehensive about the influence that dissidents can exert over young intellectuals throughout the country.

The "democratic movement" comprises articulate, well-educated veterans of the Cultural Revolution era

who are skillful political organizers and tacticians. Like the Red Guards of 1966-67, many are children of high-ranking party officials who know the activities of senior officials and the government's inner workings in detail. Their underground journals, which publish the most strident criticism of the regime, have been found in every major city.

Their leaders are men like Wang Xizhe and Xu Wenli, two well-known polemicists who were arrested in the crackdown last spring. Wang first came to national attention in 1973 as one of the Li Yizhe group—writers of a widely circulated wall poster, put up in Canton, that criticized in highly emotional terms the excesses of the Cultural Revolution. Xu and Wang were "heroes" of the spontaneous mass demonstrations on 5 April 1976 in Tiananmen Square and later set the pace for the protests of the "Beijing spring" in 1979. Some high

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*Zhang Zhixin, a dissident persecuted by Mao's nephew and Liaoning party boss Mao Yuanxin, has become a cause celebre among young democrats in China.*



*Wang Xizhe, one of the Li Yizhe group and a leading dissident.*

party officials, who believe that they represent the views of many educated youth, have given them tacit support, and they have published their views in Hong Kong leftist publications.

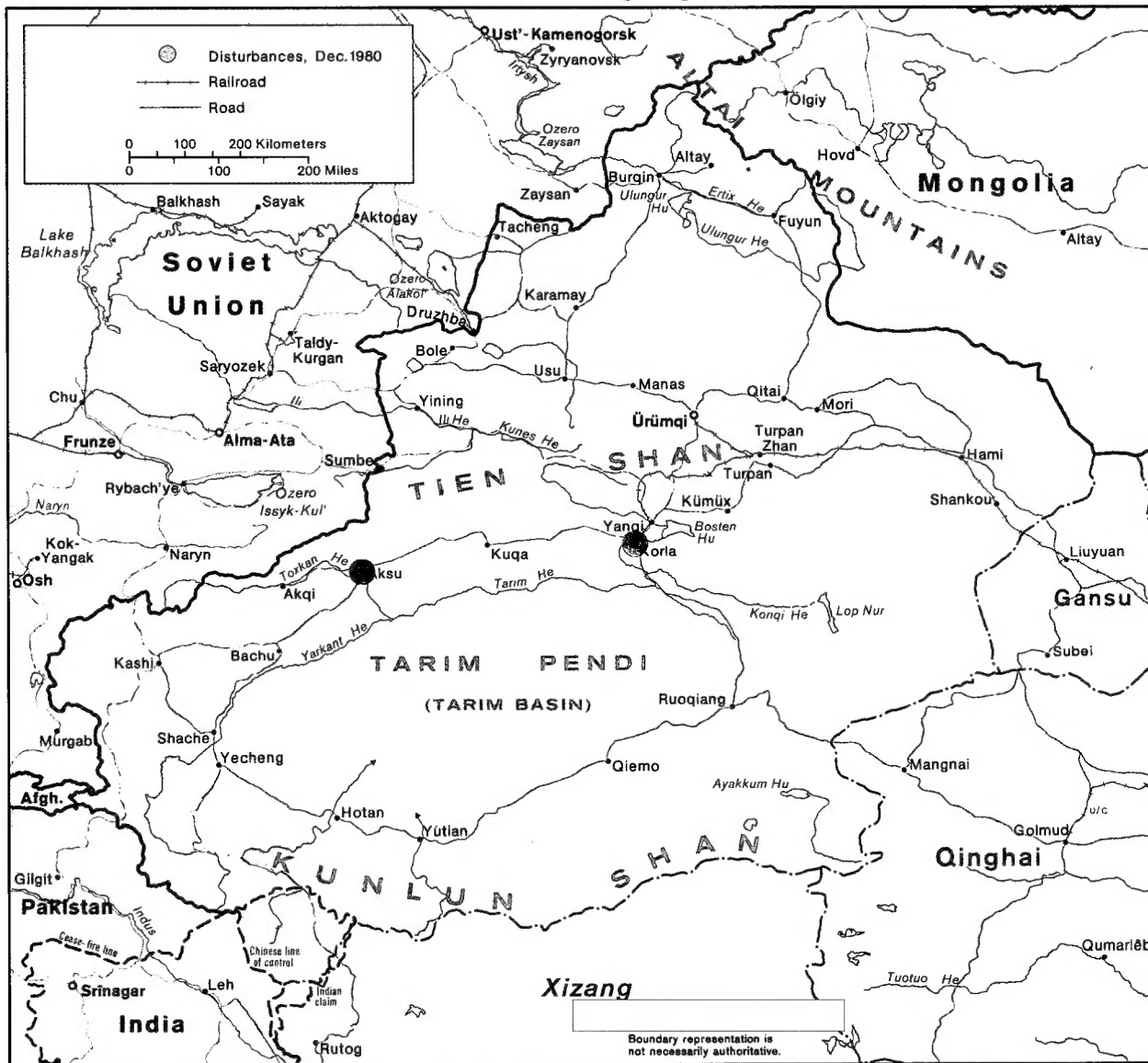
**Militant workers**, some of whom are political radicals, have sporadically challenged party hegemony in the factory and may have organized some of the strikes that hit the country last fall. Party officials—sensitive to the parallels with the Polish situation—have tried hard to prevent alliances between radical intellectuals and young workers, especially where labor unrest has occurred. In the northern city of Taiyuan last October—the scene of shutdowns and labor agitation—dissident journals ridiculed the official notion that workers are the “masters” of China and denounced the Communist party’s suppression and exploitation of the working class. Some publications were discovered by police in factories that went on strike.

**The “down-to-the-countryside” settlers**—people sent to rural areas under party policy established in the early 1960s—were at the forefront of the first outburst of dissident activity in 1979. They have continued to agitate for an improvement in their living conditions and for return to their home cities. Last December, for example, 60,000 to 70,000 settlers staged mass demonstrations in Xinjiang to protest the regime’s failure to improve their conditions and to demand the right to return to Shanghai. A stall in negotiations led to rioting, the occupation of the local party headquarters, clashes with officials, and a standoff with troops called in to quell the disturbances.

News of the rioting in Xinjiang sparked sympathetic demonstrations in Shanghai, where an estimated 10,000 people gathered to listen to returned settlers describe their plight. The authorities in Shanghai and other eastern cities have been unable to send back illegal returnees, who may number some 20,000 and remain a persistent source of anxiety for local officials.

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## CHINA: Chinese Settler Disturbances in Xinjiang



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Some of the protesting settlers have links to the "democratic movement" and have published unofficial journals critical of the regime. Because of the depth of their discontent, and because large numbers of such settlers are concentrated in the strategically important region of Xinjiang near the Soviet border, their actions have provoked great concern among the leadership about maintaining order. Beijing wants to prevent settlers from returning because this would exacerbate the existing problem of urban unemployment. [ ]

Criticism of the party is a strong undercurrent on *university campuses*. Last fall the elections of delegates to Local Peoples' Congresses gave dissidents the opportunity to galvanize China's largely apathetic campuses. Widespread demonstrations occurred that focused on various issues—including party control of academic life and cadre abuses. [ ]

At Beijing University, for example, the elections embroiled the campus in turmoil for two months. They sparked rallies, student journals, discussion groups, and big character posters in which students aired their views on current political issues, including the history of the party, the assessment of Mao Zedong, the meaning of democracy, and the critique of "bureaucratism." Candidates at Beijing University and other campuses who described themselves as "anti-Marxist" ran and won election as deputies. Criticism of the party and of Mao was vigorous, and party attempts to refute student views in debates were largely unsuccessful. The recent crackdown has bottled up expression of dissent for the time being, but the prevailing campus critique of the party and its general acceptance by students pose a potentially serious morale problem in the long run. [ ]

*The arts*—particularly fiction and films—have produced the most trenchant criticism of the party. The persuasive power of the written word—traditionally esteemed in China—and the recent Chinese fascination with films provide dissident writers with a large and receptive audience. In the last few years, they have articulated mass grievances and have been the cutting edge of social criticism in China. [ ]

With the emergence of the "scar" literature<sup>1</sup> since 1978, a literature of protest has grown up that is remarkable for its boldness in exposing "contradictions" in Chinese society. Writers—many of them rehabilitated rightists who no longer feel they have anything to lose by criticizing the party—began first to explore the inequities of the Cultural Revolution and have subsequently spared no sector of official China in uncovering fraud, deceit, and corruption. The bravest authors have documented cadre incompetence, accused army generals, exposed the cruelty of the "down-to-the-countryside" program, and ruthlessly satirized Mao and all that is sacred to the old guard. [ ]

Senior reformist officials, like party Chairman Hu Yaobang and cultural leader Zhou Yang, generally sympathize with the artists' critiques of the party. This has also encouraged expose writing and some investigative reporting in China's national press. Conservatives and some party reformers, however, have been alarmed and have attempted—so far to little effect—to direct the writers toward service to the party. [ ]

#### Deng and Dissent

Deng Xiaoping, the prime mover in the recent crackdown on dissent, initially supported the right of dissidents to criticize the party and clearly sought to use their critiques to his advantage against his opponents. He told [ ] that wall posters had been "in conformity with the Chinese constitution" and that the Chinese people had "the capability to judge the truth." He encouraged dissidents to attack the leftist excesses and manipulated their critiques to gain support for his personnel and policy positions in the Politburo. He lashed out at adversaries for attempting to "still dissent" and to suppress the "activism of the masses," and was successful in purging leftist opponents like party Vice Chairman Wang Dongxing after party debates that echoed dissident complaints. [ ]

<sup>1</sup> Literature that dwells extensively on the abuses associated with the Mao era. [ ]

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Deng's initial manipulation of dissident critiques exposed his flanks to political attack in the Politburo. Deng's opponents linked his moderate policies toward intellectuals, his calls for the democratization of the party and society, and his reform-oriented social policies with support for dissidents. They charged that Deng and his reform policies were largely responsible for growing social disorder in April 1979, and alleged that dissidents constituted a fifth column, rather than a loyal opposition, because they refused to acknowledge the primacy of the party. [ ]

Deng himself, now concerned about the dissidents' potential as a long-term threat to internal stability, responded with arrests of the most prominent dissidents and an enunciation of the "four basic principles." These insist that despite the party's determination to "emancipate the mind," all criticism must defer to socialism, the dictatorship of the proletariat, party leadership, and Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought. [ ]

Deng and his allies not only are antagonized by dissident critiques of the validity of the socialist system but also have drawn lessons from the crisis in Poland, where grass-roots political action snowballed into a broad-based effort to reform the party. Deng has become increasingly concerned that dissident ideas may attract workers and intellectuals away from the party and believes that dissident critiques have aggravated, not healed, the party's "crisis of confidence." A sense of eroding support for the Communist party and a general disdain on the part of Chinese intellectuals for Marxism-Leninism have almost certainly buttressed these apprehensions. [ ]

Since the December 1980 work conference, when the party acknowledged the depth of China's current economic problems, party leaders have stressed the importance of "stability and unity" to ensure the success of economic readjustment. They were concerned that dissident critiques would only fuel popular unhappiness with high inflation, unemployment, and temporary shortages while factories are restructured. [ ]

In support of his harder line against the dissidents, Deng has expressed concern about their:

- Critique of the socialist system. Deng does not want to extinguish legitimate criticism, but he will not tolerate views that question the validity of the socialist system or party supremacy. Deng has told party leaders more than once that dissidents "wished to practice democracy without party leadership" and has promised that this would never be permitted.
- Competition with the leadership and the reform program. Deng, Hu Yaobang, and other senior reform leaders are concerned that the public recognition accorded the dissidents has included the perception that the party has lagged behind their actions. Mao was first openly debunked in wall posters and only later—after the party adopted the dissidents' slogan—officially described as "a man and not a god."
- Organization and infiltration into the party. Despite the small size of the dissident movement, Deng and party leaders are worried—with some reason—about the organization of networks among dissident groups on college campuses, in cities across China, and in factories. Deng wants to prevent young reformers in the party from forging links with dissident organizations. The party leadership realizes that as in Poland dissidents could well begin a reform movement from below in the party.
- Foreign involvement. Deng has criticized the dissidents for accepting foreign, "bourgeois" ideas of democracy and freedom. He has been wary of the contacts dissidents have developed with foreign reporters and has backed accusations that they are passing state secrets. The party made an ideological case last spring that "class struggle" must be carried out against the influence of foreign ideas like "anarchism" and "ultra-individualism." Beyond these concerns, moreover, Deng believes that dissident activity fosters an image of Chinese instability abroad and, through its blunt criticism of Chinese leaders, demeans China's dignity. [ ]

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Deng has continued to line up with conservative views on the need to control dissent since the party's central work conference last December. While ostensibly supporting the principle of "socialist democracy," Deng has agreed to a dragnet to arrest the most outspoken dissidents and to permit party documents that mandate the restriction of forums for dissidents. He has again demonstrated that he will sacrifice the interests of some in his group who favor greater freedom of expression to the more urgent need for social order and discipline. Indeed, this trade-off on Deng's list was apparently a precondition to the endorsement for his critical objectives—removal of party Chairman Hua Guofeng and agreement on the reassessment of Mao Zedong—from senior party leaders. [REDACTED]

Although agreeing with the need to limit dissent, Deng has squelched the efforts of hardliners to broaden the crackdown significantly. In particular, he has tried to separate the harsher approach toward "dissent" from the maintenance of a moderate policy to intellectuals whose support he believes is critical to the success of his reform program. Deng has reassured them that the crackdown does not mark a fundamental change in the regime's policies and has told them that they will not become targets of a political campaign against dissent. In trying to limit the targets for the hardliners, Deng has reined in some of his own supporters who have backed dissidents and who want greater liberalization. Nevertheless, Deng must move cautiously or risk alienating some of his own supporters in the party as he moves to accommodate the concerns of the hardliners. [REDACTED]

#### **The Views Surrounding Deng**

Hardliners who oppose the liberal emphasis of Deng's reform program—like number-two ranking Ye Jianying and Army General Political Department Director Wei Guoqing—attribute the dissidents' excesses to difficulties created by reform. They have sought to tie the demands for greater democracy and "human rights" with a wide range of social and economic problems, especially rising crime rates, poor economic performance, the party's "crisis of confidence," and labor unrest. [REDACTED]

Leading military figures have been most strident in asserting that Deng's moderate policies toward intellectuals provide fertile ground for the growth of dissent. The Army, which has forcefully expressed displeasure with the reformers' emphasis on material rewards and pragmatic ideology, vigorously criticized liberal writers this spring as representatives of the "ideological trend toward the liberalization" of Chinese society. [REDACTED]

Even senior leaders associated with party reform like Vice Chairman Chen Yun and party Chairman Hu Yaobang deeply distrust dissidence. They see dissident wall posters and pamphlets as an extension of the disruptive mass politics of the 1960s. These leaders have accused young dissidents of being proponents of a "second Cultural Revolution," and "anarchists" and "ultra-individualists" who are unpatriotic and infatuated with Western ideas. [REDACTED]

Even so, many reformers, who now occupy important positions in culture, the media, and the scientific establishment, tolerate dissent. They fear that suppression would lead to a restriction of the regime's liberal policies toward intellectuals and have continued to lobby for increased intellectual freedom. Deng has tried to convince reformers to accept his concessions to hardliners on dissent, but he will face pressure in the future to reopen the "window of democracy." [REDACTED]

#### **Containing Dissent**

The party has instituted a variety of measures to control dissent in addition to the arrests of leading dissidents and the suppression of unofficial publications. [REDACTED]

Media campaigns have tightened guidelines for intellectuals, chastened errant writers and artists, and warned against further dissident activity. The campaigns seek to increase confidence in the party and to strengthen the political reliability of intellectuals. [REDACTED]

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The intensified political indoctrination on college campuses and in the party insists upon adherence to party leadership and the "four basic principles." It invokes the virtues of patriotism, and resurrects Maoist social models and slogans to guide the behavior of intellectuals. The party has wrapped itself ostentatiously in the mantle of Chinese traditional culture, called for proper behavior among youth, reiterated the necessity for hierarchy and obedience to authority, and sought to channel youthful energies into the creation of a Marxist "spiritual civilization."

The national media have also urged writers to adhere to party guidelines. The military, which has been disgruntled because of its dim prospects for benefiting from modernization despite the party stress on material incentives, took the lead in reining in liberal writers in mid-April. Then, the *Liberation Army Daily* openly attacked writer Bai Hua for his film-script "Bitter Love" in a manner that smacked of the tactics of the Cultural Revolution.

The party has issued central directives that assert tighter control over art and literature and call for the suppression of dissident organizations. The directives attack dissidents in harsh language for attempting to seize party power and to "see the state plunged into chaos." They restrict dissident activities, ban "links" between dissident organizations, order the arrest of dissidents who continue to publish in defiance of party orders, and call for the investigation of party members suspected of having connections with dissident groups.

The directives also order officially sponsored writers to accept the consensus on the historical evaluation of Mao Zedong and place restrictions on further criticism of sensitive periods in the party's history—such as the Cultural Revolution and the 1957 Anti-Rightist Movement. The party has instructed writers to submit to greater party control over the arts by emphasizing their responsibility to socialist society.

The party has also decided to use its propaganda apparatus to check dissidents within its own ranks.

### Reactions and Implications

Dissidents have won widespread sympathy—mostly in China's cities—for their positions, which has given them prominence and potential influence that exceeds their numbers. They have articulated the grievances of China's young and its intellectuals with the party, and, most tellingly, have by their example forced the party to address many of their complaints. They have made national issues out of the special privileges of party officials and the need for rule by law and party obedience to the constitution. Even though the more radical "democratic movement" dissidents are vulnerable to periodic crackdowns, dissidents in art and literature continue to command sizable audiences and to address similar issues.

The dissidents do not pose a threat to the regime; indeed, it has easily rounded up as many as 200 dissidents across China and closed down all unofficial publications. Nevertheless, the dissident issue is symptomatic of larger problems the Chinese leadership faces. The party will be able to muffle, but not to extinguish, its critics, and dissent will continue to appear in one form or another, sounding similar themes.

The suppression of dissent has caused friction between the Army and the party, and between conservatives and liberals in both organizations. The Army used its critique of Bai Hua in the *Liberation Army Daily* to

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raise broader objections to party reforms; it has also sought to blunt the reformer's critique of "leftism" in the Army and to revive Maoist standards for the arts. Deng, who gave the Army its opening by permitting criticism of Bai Hua's film "Bitter Love," subsequently ordered limits on the Army's critique. [redacted]

Reaction to the party's harder line among intellectuals, especially liberals in the Ministry of Culture, has been cool. Liberal writers—including senior cultural figures like Zhou Yang, deputy director of the Propaganda Department—countered the Army's initiative by awarding a prize to Bai Hua for another of his works and publishing speeches in *People's Daily* that endorse a comparatively moderate cultural policy. These actions helped to limit the scope of a crackdown and worked to ensure that cultural policy would guarantee at least a modicum of intellectual freedom. [redacted]

The provincial media have mostly echoed the line contained in the restrictive central directives, but actual compliance with the documents has been spotty. Provincial First Secretaries in several provinces have protected writers who were singled out for criticism by the party Propaganda Department and have tried to soften the criticism of authors overall. Others—notably in Hebei Province—have, however, loudly endorsed the tougher line of *Liberation Army Daily*. [redacted]

The party, which has traditionally associated dissent with foreign influence, has already made some efforts to supervise more closely or curtail cultural programs and contacts with foreigners. It has also placed greater restrictions on the activities of American social scientists doing research in China and has issued documents limiting the access of Western reporters to Chinese officials. The party, moreover, has banned several Hong Kong leftist magazines [redacted]

The decision to suppress dissent could also pose political problems for Deng's reform program. Faced with serious economic and political difficulties, Deng

has leaned toward conservative demands for "stability and unity," muffling the voice of popular dissatisfaction that has served his interests in disciplining and rectifying the bureaucracy. He risks alienating members of his reform group who advocate the tolerance of dissent and liberalization of Chinese society. [redacted]

As the suppression of dissent strains relations between reformers and leftists in the party, it may raise the level of tension in the bureaucracy and embolden those who seek to discredit the reform program. Senior reformers, who are known to have protected dissidents in the past, will be vulnerable to leftist critiques. Although dissidents attack the left with vehemence, the ultimate victims may be the party reformers. [redacted]

Deng must deal with the prospect that diminishing enthusiasm among the intellectuals may extinguish the sense of innovation required for modernization as well. The party has never successfully disciplined intellectuals and won their allegiance to its programs. While reformers have to a degree championed and used dissident issues, their need to compromise with vested interests in the party to secure key changes in the leadership will restrain further identification with those themes. [redacted]

Efforts to recruit more intellectuals to party ranks are likely to be slowed by revivals of the worn out and unappealing Maoist themes of the 1950s and 1960s. Problems with young intellectuals—particularly those now on college campuses—in the future could well appear in efforts to emigrate, a lack of active support for the regime, and indifferent performance in the work place. [redacted]

The move to suppress dissent is likely to strengthen the resolve of those who oppose or seek to criticize the party. Reflecting the complexity of the dissident movement, the PLA's thwarted attack on writer Bai Hua provoked a strong reaction from more liberal figures in the Cultural Ministry and in the media—a further encouragement to dissidents outside official circles [redacted]

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Current restrictions on dissident activity seem unlikely to loosen in the near future. The "Resolution on Certain Historical Questions" recently passed at the party Central Committee's Sixth Plenum clearly stated the party's determination that dissidents not "air their views in a big way," and it supported the party's decision to prosecute "rightists" in the late 1950s. Hence, another blossoming of dissent probably will not occur, but dissidents will remain a low-level irritant for the regime in the future.

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In the event that a crisis within the leadership occurs, dissidents have the potential to rally the people against the regime and to spark mass demonstrations like the Tiananmen rally that led to the fall of the Gang of Four in 1976. Dissidents have shown an extraordinary ability to organize and articulate mass frustrations with the regime—a legacy they have inherited from the Cultural Revolution. In the long run, however, the course of dissent will depend upon the success of Deng and party reformers in reviving the economy and consolidating their hold on the party.

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